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the statement that the War Office authorities have decided to do away with part of the scientific training at the Royal Military College at Woolwich, by closing the chemical laboratory—a curious step backwards for modern times.

IN investigating pitchblende to find why the activity of the Becquerel rays is not proportionate to the amount of uranium present, a rule holding in general for compounds of uranium, M. P. Curie and Mme. S. Curie have isolated a new substance which appears to be a new metal. It is, according to the *Comptes Rendus*, thrown down with the bismuth sulfid and partly separated by heating in vacuum to 700° C., the sublimate obtained having 400 times the activity of uranium. The spectrum, however, emits no characteristic lines. The name of *polonium* is suggested for the new substance, from the country where the pitchblende was found. J. L. H.

ZOOLOGICAL NOTES.

IN a recently issued excerpt from the Bulletin of the U. S. Fish Commission, Dr. Hugh M. Smith treats of the Florida Commercial Sponges, briefly describing the species taken and discussing the causes of their decrease and the possible remedies for it. The causes of decrease are the usual ones, the taking of small sponges and excessive fishing; the proposed remedies are the enforcement of the laws against taking small sponges and the prohibition of sponging on certain grounds for definite periods. From the very rapid rate of growth assigned to the most valuable species, the sheepswool sponge; it is evident that the restocking of the depleted sponge beds would be a very simple matter if the above remedial measures could be enforced. Dr. Smith tells us that experiments seem to show that the sheepswool may, under favorable conditions, attain a weight of one tenth of a pound in six months and reach

a commercial size in a year. He considers that sponge culture promises well for Florida waters, where, for some reason, growth is more rapid than in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, the introduction of Mediterranean sponges is regarded as problematical, and it is a question if the introduced sponges would retain their superiority under the changed environment. The paper is illustrated by numerous half-tone plates of commercial sponges.

F. A. L.

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

THE ZOQUE LANGUAGE.

AN important contribution to American linguistics is the 22d volume of the 'Bibliothèque Linguistique Américaine' (Paris, Maisonneuve), which has just appeared. It is entitled 'Langue Zoque et Langue Mixe,' and is edited by M. Raoul de la Grasserie (1898, pp. 384). Most of it is occupied with the Zoque, of which a grammatical outline is given and a vocabulary of nearly 7,000 words from the MS. of Father Luis Gonzales (1672). This is further compared with the modern Zoque as spoken at present in Chiapas.

The Mixe is represented by the Grammar of Father Quintana (1730), a short vocabulary and some texts.

The work closes with a comparison of the Zoque and Mixe, showing them rather closely related members of the same stock, though with notable differences in words and in morphology, especially that the Mixe prefixes the pronoun in the conjugation, while the Zoque suffixes it.

M. de la Grasserie has edited these materials with great care, and the volume is a valuable addition to linguistic literature.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF BRUNSWICK.

ON the occasion of the meeting this year of the German Anthropological Society at Brunswick, a little volume has been issued

on the anthropology of that duchy ('Beiträge zur Anthropologie Braunschweigs,' pp. 163, 1898, Braunschweig, Vieweg). It contains nine essays by local writers, beginning with the remains of palæolithic man in the 'diluvial' strata by Dr. W. Blasius. The relics seem to be adequate to proving his presence at that time. The jade axes found in the region are described by Professor Kloos; the bronzes by Instructor Voges; the medieval vessels by Dr. Hänselmann; ancient skulls by Dr. Berkhan; local peasant costumes by Dr. Richard Andree; wood carving by Mr. Vasel; megalithic monuments by Inspector Grabowsky; and some curious folk-lore by Pastor Schattenberg. The illustrations are abundant and good.

This is an excellent idea, and ought to be followed in other localities on such occasions.

THE QUERANDIES.

AN extended monograph on Argentine ethnography has recently appeared from the pen of Felix F. Outes ('Los Querandies,' Buenos Aires, 1897, pp. 202; illustrated). It is a study of the culture and affiliations of the tribe which, at the discovery, occupied the site and vicinity of the modern city of Buenos Aires. They were known to early writers as the Querandis, a Guarani term of no ethnic significance. Some authorities have claimed them as of the Guarani stock, others as of Pampean (Aucanian) origin. Mr. Outes, following Lafone Quevedo, holds them to have been of Guaycuru affinity. Only a few proper names remain, and their relics, which he studies at length, are not decisive. The evidence, however, leans in his favor. The same can not be said when he includes their neighbors to the north, the Charuas, in this family also. There is negative evidence which would place those either as a separate stock or among the Brazilian families.

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SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

AT the recent meeting of the British Association Professor W. Ramsay and Dr. Morris Travers announced the discovery of a new elementary constituent of air, which they named xenon, the stranger. It has been separated from both air and argon by the process of liquefaction and subsequent distillation. It has a well-marked spectrum, similar in general character to that of argon, and, like it, greatly altered in appearance by the interposition of a jar and spark-gap; but the positions of the lines of the spectrum differ totally from those of argon lines.

THROUGH the generosity of Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt, the New York Botanical Garden is about to undertake a botanical exploration of the island of Porto Rico. The expedition, which is now being organized, will leave for the new colony within a few weeks, and will carry on collecting of museum and herbarium specimens and living plants for at least six months. Inasmuch as very little is yet known concerning the natural flora of the island, it is confidently expected that much of value and interest will be secured, and the collections will furnish the basis of a report on the botany and vegetable productions of our newly-acquired territory.

DURING the past summer much progress has been made in the New York Botanical Garden, in Bronx Park. The construction of the Museum building has proceeded rapidly, three-fourths of its steel frame being in place, the walls being completed as far as the second story. The warm and wet summer has been favorable to the plants. Much progress has been made in planting the border, which will be completed during the autumn. It will be about two miles in length and will contain some three hundred and fifty varieties of trees and shrubs.

A STATUE of Van Beneden, the eminent zoologist, has recently been unveiled at Malines.

DR. ARTHUR BORNTÄGER has been appointed Director of the Agricultural Station at Palermo.

MR. W. H. HOLMES, of the United States National Museum, has gone to California to visit the Calaveras region.